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ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

**Science
Reporter**



MK Yadav Sir

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'Operation Ajay' set to evacuate Indian nationals from Israel

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

India is putting in place a major operation to evacuate its citizens who wish to return from conflict-hit Israel. Announcing the initiative late on Wednesday, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said special chartered flights are being arranged.

This will be the second evacuation this year, after Operation Kaveri that brought back several thousand Indian citizens from conflict-torn Sudan in April-May.

"Launching Operation Ajay to facilitate the return from Israel of our citizens who wish to return. Special charter flights and other arrangements being put in place. Fully committed to the safety and well-being of our nationals abroad," posted Mr. Jaishankar on X, formerly Twitter.

The Indian Embassy in Tel Aviv stated that it has emailed the first lot of registered Indian citizens for

Israel pounds Gaza by air; Hamas fights on

JERUSALEM/GAZA

Israel bombed Gaza overnight ahead of a potential ground assault against Hamas. Israel's death toll reached 1,200 with more than 2,700 wounded, its military said. The group's armed wing, al Qassam Brigades, said it was still fighting inside Israel on Wednesday. » PAGE 15

the special flight that is expected to take off for India on Thursday. "Messages to other registered people will follow for subsequent flights," said the embassy in a post on X.

The announcement has come days after Air India suspended its service in the Delhi-Tel Aviv route as Hamas carried out a crippling attack on Israel last Saturday.

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Context: Recently, the Union Ministry of External Affairs initiated 'Operation Ajay' to evacuate Indian citizens from the conflict zone amid ongoing clashes between IDF and Hamas in Israel.

- The nation came under unprecedented **attack by the Hamas militant group** that rules the Gaza Strip.

Operation Ajay

- India announced the launch "**Operation Ajay**" to help Indians stuck in Israel to return home as fresh tension triggered in the region as Hamas militants made a series of brazen attacks on Israeli towns over the weekend.
- As per the external affairs ministry, **around 18,000 Indians** are currently residing in Israel.

Hamas

- Hamas, founded in 1987, is a **Palestinian Islamist political organization** and militant group.
- Its primary goal is **to establish an Islamic state** in Palestine.
- Several countries, **including the United States, Canada, and the European Union**, have designated Hamas as a terrorist organization.
- **Hamas has been responsible** for various attacks on Israeli civilians and military targets, such as suicide bombings, rocket attacks, and kidnappings.

India, China hold 20th round of talks on border row

Both sides agree to maintain peace: MEA

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 11

INDIA AND China held the 20th round of military talks earlier this week and both sides agreed to maintain the momentum of dialogue through military and diplomatic mechanisms while committing to maintain peace in the border areas in the interim, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Wednesday.

The 20th round of Corps Commander Level Meeting was held at Chushul-Mokdo border meeting point on the Indian side on Monday and Tuesday.

The latest round of talks comes nearly two months after the 19th round of military talks held in August where India had pressed for access to all old patrolling points along the LAC. The talks were held about a week before the BRICS leaders' summit where Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping had met.

Both sides exchanged views in a frank, open and constructive manner for an early and mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues along the LAC in the Western Sector, in accordance with the guidance provided by the national leadership of the two countries, and building on the progress made in the last round of Corps Commanders' Meeting held on 13-14 August 2023," the MEA said in a statement issued late Wednesday.

As per sources, disengagement of the troops deployed by both sides along the LAC and overall de-escalation of troops in the Ladakh region was part of

the agenda as was adherence to existing protocols and sharing of patrol information to prevent clashes on ground.

There has been no concrete forward movement in the last few rounds of talks on resolution of legacy issues or an overall de-escalation of troops in eastern Ladakh.

After the 19th round of military talks in August, there was also a Major General level meeting held between both sides to chalk out finer details of the points discussed in the corps commander level talks.

Commanders on the ground were also working on possible scenarios for limited disengagement at certain mutually-accepted points along the boundary. However, any such plan has not yet been implemented.

This will be the fourth consecutive winter marking the military standoff between India and China which began ahead of May 2020.

In September last year, both sides pulled back troops to disengage from Patrolling Point-1 in the Gogra-Hot Springs area of Eastern Ladakh, marking a step forward in the military standoff between the two sides which began in May 2020.

Friction points such as Galwan Valley, north and south banks of Pangong Tso and the Gogra-Hot Springs area have seen some resolution in the last three years with the creation of buffer zones. There is, however, yet to be any disengagement at the legacy friction points such as Depsang Plains and Demchok. Around 50,000-60,000 troops remain deployed on both sides of the India-China border.

Context: India and China recently held their 20th round of military talks, reaffirming their commitment to peace in the border areas through ongoing dialogue.

Line of Actual Control (LAC)

- **About:** The LAC is the demarcation that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory.
- **Three Areas:** Western (Ladakh, Kashmir),
 - Middle (Uttarakhand, Himachal) and
 - Eastern (Sikkim, Arunachal).
- As **LAC is not fully and officially demarcated**, it has led to differing perceptions regarding the alignment, with China making territorial claims in the following areas.
- **The countries disagree on the exact location** of the LAC in various areas, so much so that India claims that the LAC is 3,488 km long while the Chinese believe it to be around 2,000 km long.
- The **two armies try to dominate** by patrolling the areas up to their respective perceptions of the LAC, often bringing them into conflict.

Ladakh

- **Ladakh was granted Union Territory status** in 2019, following the bifurcation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two separate Union Territories.
- The administration of **Ladakh is currently governed by the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh** and an elected **Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC)**.



Cabinet approves Memorandum of Understanding between India and Papua New Guinea on cooperation in the field of sharing successful Digital Solutions implemented at Population Scale for Digital Transformation

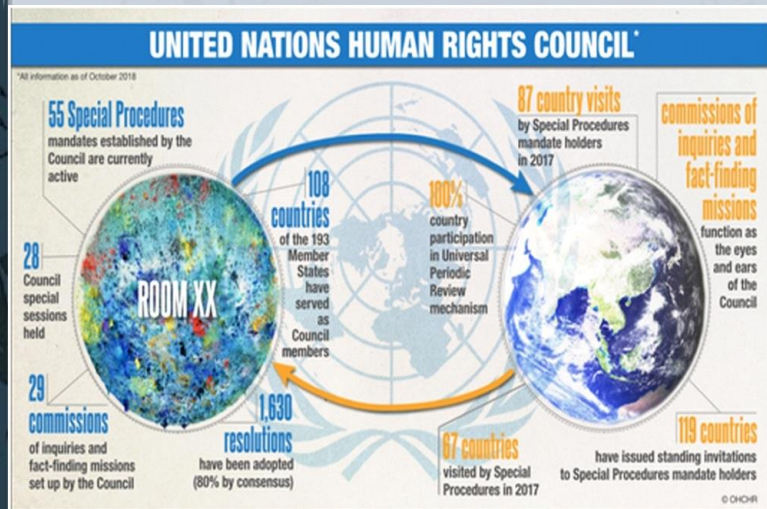


Context: The Union Cabinet, **chaired by the Prime Minister of India**, recently approved a Memorandum of **Understanding with Papua New Guinea** for sharing successful digital solutions at a population scale.

Papua New Guinea

- **Located:** Situated in the southwestern Pacific and encompasses the eastern half of New Guinea, the **world's second-largest island**, along with numerous smaller offshore islands.
- **Boundaries:** It shares its borders with Indonesia to the west, Australia to the south, and the Solomon Islands to the southeast.
- **Capital:** The capital city is Port Moresby.
- **Terrain:** The terrain is predominantly mountainous, but there are low-lying plains in southern New Guinea.
- **India is also trying to boost ties** and cooperation with the **Pacific Island nations**, which include, apart from Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, the Republic of Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Russia fails to return to UN rights body after losing vote



Functions

- It is tasked with **enhancing the promotion and protection of human rights** worldwide.
- The council addresses and provides **recommendations on human rights violations**.
- It has the authority to discuss all **thematic human rights issues** and situations.

Context: Russia recently failed in its bid to return to the **United Nations' top human rights** body.

UNHRC

- About:** The Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is an intergovernmental body within the United Nations system.
- History:** The UNHRC replaced the former UN Commission on Human Rights.
- Establishment:** By the UNGA on March 15, 2006, and held its inaugural session in June 2006.
- Headquarters:** Geneva
- Composition of Council:** 47 UN Member States elected by majority vote in a direct and secret ballot at the UNGA.
 - Membership is based on equitable geographical distribution.
 - India is currently a council member.**
- Tenure:** Members serve three-year terms and cannot be immediately re-elected after two consecutive terms.
- Funding:** Approximately two-thirds of UN Human Rights income relies on voluntary contributions from Member States and other donors.
- Leadership of the Council:** The council is led by a five-person Bureau, featuring a president and four vice-presidents, each representing one of the five regional groups.
 - Their terms align with the council's annual cycle.

Cabinet clears royalty rates for critical, strategic minerals

The approval will mark govt's maiden auction of strategic element blocks

NITIN KUMAR
New Delhi, 11 October

The Union Cabinet has approved royalty rates for three critical and strategic minerals — lithium, niobium and rare earth elements (REEs).

This decision follows Additional Mines Secretary Sanjay Lohiya's announcement on October 5 that the government is set to initiate the auction of critical mineral mines in the coming weeks.

The Cabinet note specifies the royalty rates as follows: 3 per cent of the London Metal Exchange price for lithium, 3 per cent of the average sale price (ASP) for niobium from both primary and secondary sources, and 1 per cent of the ASP for REEs, based on rare earth oxide.

Although the standard practice for minerals lacking a specified rate traditionally pegs the royalty at 12 per cent of the ASP under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, the government has chosen to amend this approach. The decision stems from the acknowledgement that the existing fixed rate was considerably higher than that of other critical and strategic minerals and exceeded the rates seen in other mineral-producing nations.

The Ministry of Mines has also developed a formula for calculating the ASP of these minerals, streamlining the process of establishing bidding parameters.

According to the Cabinet statement, this approval for specifying royalty rates will mark the central government's maiden auction of lithium, niobium,



Go-ahead to digital tech pact with France

The Union Cabinet approved three separate MoUs with Papua New Guinea, France, Trinidad and Tobago in the field of digital technologies. The MoU with France intends to promote closer cooperation and exchange of information pertaining to digital technologies. PTI

Nod to establish body for youth development

The Union Cabinet approved establishment of an autonomous body 'Mera Yuva Bharat' (MY Bharat) to serve as an overarching enabling mechanism powered by technology for youth development, Union minister Anurag Thakur said. PTI

SEALING THE DEAL

LITHIUM

3% of London Metal Exchange price

NIONIUM

3% of average sale price (both primary, secondary sources)

RARE EARTH ELEMENTS

1% of average sale price of rare earth oxide

CRITICAL RAW MATERIALS (Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

Context: The Union Cabinet recently approved royalty rates for **critical minerals** including lithium, niobium, and **rare earth elements (REEs)**.

- The government's initiative to auction critical minerals coincides with **India's goal of reaching** net-zero emissions by 2070.
- **Lithium is extensively used in batteries**, niobium finds applications in superalloys and superconductors, and REEs are vital components in electronics and clean energy technologies.

Critical Raw Materials

- **About:** Critical minerals are a cluster of minerals crucial for diverse industrial sectors, carrying significant economic and security implications for a nation.
- **Found:** Earth's crust
- **Examples:** Rare earth elements, lithium, cobalt, graphite, platinum group metals, and certain minerals and metals.
- **Top Producers:** Chile, Indonesia, Congo, China, Australia and South Africa.
- **Niobium (Nb):** It is an element in the Periodic Table with atomic number 41, and it's denoted by the symbol Nb.
 - It's a gentle, stretchable transition metal that doesn't corrode easily because it has a protective oxide layer on its surface.
- **Lithium (Li):** A soft and shiny gray metal, that is present in the Earth's crust. It's an extremely reactive and alkaline element.
 - Primarily utilized in ceramics, glasses, greases, pharmaceuticals, air conditioners, and aluminum production.

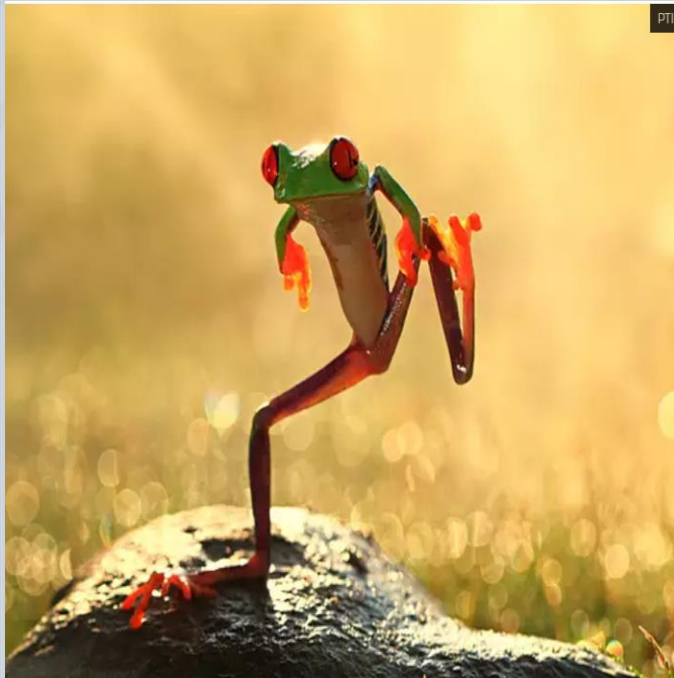
Prime Minister pays tributes to Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan on his birth anniversary

Context: The Prime Minister of India has paid tributes to **Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan** on his birth anniversary.

Lok Nayak Jaya Prakash Narayan

- **Born:** On October 11, 1902. Jay Prakash Narayan's birthday is celebrated as "**Save Democracy Day**" due to his remarkable role in the anti-emergency agitation during 1975-76.
- **Early Life and Ideological Journey:** In 1921, he joined the Non-cooperation movement and was deeply influenced by Gandhian ideology.
- A stint in the **United States exposed him to Marxist ideology**, but he ultimately embraced socialism over revolution to combat capitalism.
- **In 1929, he was invited to join** the Indian National Congress (INC) by Jawaharlal Nehru.
- **Congress Socialist Party (1934):** He established the Congress Socialist Party with the ideology of Democratic Socialism.
 - He participated in the **Quit India Movement in 1942**, advocating non-rebellion and non-violence.
- **Advocating "Total Revolution" (1975):** During the Emergency period in 1975, he called for "Total Revolution" or "Sampoorna Kranti" to completely transform society.
- **National and International Engagement:** After Jawaharlal Nehru's death, he became increasingly involved in national politics.
- **During the Bangladesh crisis**, JP served as India's ambassador to advocate for India's just cause.
- **Advocate for Human Rights:** JP's voice resonated in international crises, such as the Hungarian crisis, Czech crisis, and Tibetan crisis during his era.
- **Bharat Ratna:** In 1999, he was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna.

Dancing frogs of Western Ghats among most threatened amphibians globally



Context: Recently, the **Wildlife Trust of India** identified the dancing frogs in the Western Ghats as India's most threatened amphibian genus.

Dancing Frogs

- Endemic to the Western Ghats
- **Habitat Preference:** Thrives in dense canopy areas (70-80% coverage)
- **Fifth Most Threatened Genus** Globally, with 92% of species in the threatened category
- **Behavior:** Unique mating display near streams
- Males perform "foot flagging" to attract mates and deter competition due to stream noise
- **Ecological Significance:** Valuable in food chains and ecosystem services
- **Threats:** Endangered by invasive species, land use changes, temperature and humidity variations, extreme weather events, infectious diseases, water and light pollution, and infrastructure projects

Wildlife Trust of India

- **About:** WTI is a non-profit conservation organisation dedicated to safeguarding India's natural heritage.
 - WTI is a **registered charity in India** (under Section 12A of the Income Tax Act, 1961).
- **Founded:** In November 1998 in New Delhi, India, in response to the rapidly deteriorating state of wildlife in India.
- A **team of 3 members set out on a mission** to save the environment which has now increased to 150 full time professionals.

Govt tightens PLI rules for white goods

Context: The government recently **tightened its oversight** over the selected applicants under the **Production Linked Incentive** for white goods.

White Goods

- White goods encompass **large household appliances** like stoves, refrigerators, washing machines, and more.
- Although they're now **available in various colors**, they retain the name "white goods."
- These appliances are renowned for their **robust construction, built to endure** daily wear and tear.
- The term can also pertain to white **fabrics like linen and cotton**, including items such as curtains and towels, which were traditionally white.
- In the beverage industry**, white goods refer to colorless spirits like vodka and gin.

Brown Goods

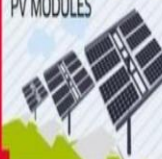
- Brown goods include relatively **lightweight electronic consumer** durables like computers, digital media players, TVs, and radios.
- Unlike **large household appliances** (white goods), brown goods are primarily oriented towards entertainment, communication, and convenience.
- These devices commonly incorporate electronic components** and are designed to deliver audio, video, or data-related services.

MANUFACTURING BOOST

₹6,238-cr SCHEME FOR WHITE GOODS SUCH AS ACS, LED LIGHTS



₹4,500-cr SCHEME FOR HIGH EFFICIENCY SOLAR PV MODULES



ACS, LEDS

₹7,920 cr
INCREMENTAL INVESTMENT

₹49,300 cr
DIRECT, INDIRECT REVENUE

400,000
DIRECT, INDIRECT JOBS

SOLAR MODULES

10,000 MW
CAPACITY ADDITION

₹17,200 cr
DIRECT INVESTMENT

30,000 DIRECT
JOBS, 1.2 MILLION
INDIRECT EMPLOYMENT



FUTURE PLANS

₹1.97 lakh CR OUTLAY FOR PLI SCHEMES FOR 13 KEY SECTORS

"We have approved nine PLI schemes out of 13 announced and four are in the advanced stage"

PIYUSH GOYAL, commerce and industry minister

Govt to select cos to incentivise manufacturing of components or sub-assemblies

PV manufacturers to be selected via competitive bidding

Chhattisgarh Baiga tribe gets habitat rights under FRA



PVTG (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups)

- PVTGs represent the most susceptible segment among India's tribal communities, necessitating enhanced support and development efforts.
- Among the **705 Scheduled Tribes in India**, 75 have garnered the PVTG classification, and their populations are dispersed across 17 states and one Union Territory.

Context: The Baiga Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) **became the second to get habitat rights** in Chhattisgarh, after the Kamar PVTG.

Baiga Tribes

- **Geographic Distribution:** The Baiga Tribe, classified as one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), **resides in regions spanning Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh.**
- A total of **19 Baiga villages with a population of 6,483** people (2,085 families) have been given the habitat rights.
- **Traditional Occupation:** Historically, the Baiga people led a semi-nomadic lifestyle and engaged in slash-and-burn agriculture. Today, their livelihood predominantly relies on minor forest produce.
- **Cultivation Method:** They practice a form of shifting cultivation known as "**Bewar**," adapting to their ecological surroundings.
- **Cultural Significance of Mahua:** Mahua, derived from the fermentation and distillation of Mahua tree flowers, holds significant cultural importance in Baiga society as a source of food and an intoxicant.
- **Tattooing Tradition:** Tattooing is an integral aspect of Baiga culture, with specific tattoos reserved for **different ages and occasions**, shaping their unique cultural identity.

Migratory birds arrive in Odisha's Chilika before winter; is climate change to blame?

Context: Recently, **migratory birds** flocked to **Chilika** for the upcoming winter season.

- Migratory birds, mostly from **beyond the Himalayas in Northern Eurasia**, the Caspian region, Siberia, Kazakhstan, Lake Baikal and the remote areas of Russia and neighbouring countries visit the Chilika every winter and start their homeward journey before the onset of summer.

Chilika Lake

- **About:** Asia's largest brackish water lagoon, Chilika is **located in Odisha**, India, at the Bay of Bengal's mouth where the Daya River flows.
- As the **largest coastal lagoon in India** and the world's second-largest, Chilika was declared a Ramsar site in 1981, reflecting its significance for biodiversity and socio-economic factors.
- **Chilika became the first Indian waterbody** to be recognized as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.
- **Kalijai Temple** - Located on an island in the Chilika Lake.
- **Migratory Birds:** Amur Falcons, Bar-headed Geese, Black-necked cranes, Marine turtles, Dugongs, Humpback Whales, etc.



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